

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF PENALTIES INCURRED AND DUE
FOR VIOLATIONS OF LAWS AND RULES**

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: DG-230377

PENALTY AMOUNT: \$2,500

Investigation # 8698

EMAIL SERVICE

Ryan Somers
Ryatt Construction, LLC
9512 Stone Ave N.
Seattle, WA 98103
Ann@ryatt.net
Caylee@ryatt.net

UBI: 603-359-332
Phone: (206) 525-0075

YOU MUST RESPOND WITHIN 15 DAYS OF THIS NOTICE

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes that Ryatt Construction, LLC, (Ryatt Construction or Company) violated Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 19.122.055(1)(a) by failing to notify the one-number locate service and caused damage to an underground gas facility.

RCW 19.122.055(1)(a) states, in part, that excavators who fail to notify a one-number locator service and cause damage to an underground gas facility are subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 for each violation.

Commission staff (Staff) conducted an investigation that included reviewing damage reports, investigation reports, a review of the One Call Center database, and communications with the Company. The documents reviewed identified a natural gas event that involved Ryatt Construction damaging a natural gas facility while excavating without a valid locate ticket.

The Commission reviewed findings and recommendations made by Commission staff and hereby notifies you that it is assessing a \$2,500 penalty (Penalty Assessment) against you on the following grounds:

1. **Alleged Violation:**

On December 14, 2022, Ryatt Construction was excavating at 7637 46th Ave S., Seattle, Washington. While excavating, Ryatt Construction workers struck and damaged an underground Puget Sound Energy (PSE) natural gas facility. The Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) report submitted by PSE on January 21, 2023, indicated that Ryatt Construction was excavating without a valid request to locate underground utilities.

2. **Analysis:**

The alleged violation concerns RCW 19.122.055(1)(a), which states, in part, that an excavator must contact the one-number locate center before beginning excavation. On December 14, 2022, Ryatt Construction was operating a backhoe to perform sewer work when it hit a 2-inch natural gas main line. The Gas First Response report provided by PSE states there was no locate ticket for Ryatt Construction at that address. The ELM report states that Ryatt Construction submitted a locate request ticket #22524977 on December 14, 2022, the day of the damage incident. Staff made several attempts to contact Ryatt Construction and obtain further information about this incident, but none has been provided.

The Commission considered the following factors in determining the appropriate penalty amount for the violation:

1. **How serious or harmful the violation is to the public.**

This incident could have been significantly more harmful to Company workers, utility technicians, nearby homeowners, and the public, and could have resulted in severe injury and/or loss of property.

2. **Whether the violation is intentional.**

The violation appears to be due to negligence rather than a lack of knowledge of Washington state's dig law. Ryatt Construction has called in 367 requests to locate over the past 12 months. The Company is aware of the requirement to contact the one-number locate service before beginning excavation.

3. **Whether the company self-reported the violation.**

Ryatt Construction did not self-report the violation. The Commission became aware of the violation when PSE filed a DIRT report following the damage incident.

4. **The likelihood of recurrence.**

Ryatt Construction was penalized on May 6, 2022, for a violation of RCW 19.122.055(1)(a) and subsequently completed Dig Safe Training on June 29, 2022. Within six months of completing the training, Ryatt Construction received this new violation. Based on this, the likelihood of recurrence remains high but depends on the Company's actions going forward and its willingness to notify the one-number locate service before beginning excavation.

5. **The Company's previous violations and penalties.**

- **Warning Letters**

- On February 20, 2015, and October 17, 2017, the Commission mailed Alleged Violation of Washington Dig Law letters to Ryatt Construction. The letters included detailed information about Washington state's underground utility damage prevention act, requirements for submitting utility locate requests before excavating, and the possibility of penalties for each violation. The Commission mailed the letter after receiving reports of damage caused by Ryatt Construction on December 1, 2014, and August 18, 2017, that occurred because the Company failed to submit a request to locate underground utilities before excavating.

- **Penalty Assessments**

- On May 11, 2018, the Commission issued Ryatt Construction a Penalty Assessment of \$3,500 for two violations of RCW 19.122.055(1)(a) – DG-180386.
- On November 9, 2018, the Commission issued Ryatt Construction a Penalty Assessment of \$5,000 for one violation of RCW 19.122.055(1)(a) – DG-180829.
- On May 6, 2022, the Commission issued Ryatt Construction a Penalty Assessment of \$1,000 for one violation of RCW 19.122.055(1)(a) – DG-220188.

The Commission has considered these factors and determined that it should penalize Ryatt Construction as follows:

- \$2,500 penalty for one violation of RCW 19.122.055(1)(a)

These facts, if proven at a hearing and not rebutted or explained, are sufficient to support the Penalty Assessment.

Your penalty is due and payable now. If you believe the violation did not occur, you may deny committing the violation and contest the penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. Or, if there is a reason for the violation that you believe should excuse you from the penalty, you may ask for mitigation (reduction) of the penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for a hearing only if material issues of law or fact require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any request to contest the violation or for mitigation of the penalty must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that request. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the request. *See* RCW 81.04.405.

If you properly present your request for a hearing and the Commission grants that request, the Commission will review the evidence supporting your dispute of the violation or application for mitigation in a Brief Adjudicative Proceeding before an administrative law judge. The administrative law judge will consider the evidence and will notify you of their decision.

You must act within 15 days after receiving this Penalty Assessment to do one of the following:

- Pay the \$2,500 penalty amount due; or
- Request a hearing to contest the occurrence of the violations; or
- Request mitigation to reduce the amount of the penalty.

Please indicate your selection on the enclosed form and submit it electronically through the Commission's web portal at <https://efiling.utc.wa.gov/Form> **within FIFTEEN (15) days** after you receive this Penalty Assessment. If you are unable to use the web portal, you may submit it via email to records@utc.wa.gov. If you are unable to submit the form electronically, you may send a paper copy to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, PO Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250.

If you wish to make your payment online, please use this link: [Make a Payment Now \(wa.gov\)](#).¹

If you do not act within 15 days, the Commission may refer this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for collection.

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective [Click or tap to enter a date](#)..

/s/Rayne Pearson
RAYNE PEARSON
Director, Administrative Law Division

¹ <https://www.utc.wa.gov/documents-and-proceedings/online-payments/make-payment-now>.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT DG-230377 Investigation # 8698

PLEASE NOTE: You must complete and sign this document and send it to the Commission within 15 days after you receive the penalty assessment. Use additional paper if needed.

I have read and understand RCW 9A.72.020 (printed below), which states that making false statements under oath is a class B felony. I am over the age of 18, am competent to testify to the matters set forth below and I have personal knowledge of those matters. I hereby make, under oath, the following statements:

- [] 1. **Payment of penalty.** I admit that the violation occurred:
 - [] Enclose \$2,500 in payment of the penalty.
 - OR [] Attest that I have paid the penalty in full through the Commission’s payment portal.

- [] 2. **Contest the violation.** I believe that the alleged violation did not occur for the reasons I describe below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your contest here, your request will be denied**):
 - [] a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision.
 - OR [] b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

- [] 3. **Request mitigation.** I admit the violation, but I believe that the penalty should be reduced for the reasons set out below (**if you do not include reasons supporting your application here, your request will be denied**):
 - [] a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision.
 - OR [] b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing, including information I have presented on any attachments, is true and correct.

Dated: _____ [Month/Day/Year], at _____ [City, State]

Name of Respondent (Company) – please print

Signature of Applicant

RCW 9A.72.020 “Perjury in the first degree.”

- (1) A person is guilty of perjury in the first degree if in any official proceeding he or she makes a materially false statement which he or she knows to be false under an oath required or authorized by law.
- (2) Knowledge of the materiality of the statement is not an element of this crime, and the actor's mistaken belief that his or her statement was not material is not a defense to a prosecution under this section.
- (3) Perjury in the first degree is a class B felony.